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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

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Broadly speaking, the aims of extension work are to help farm people attain and enjoy "the more abundant life."

The primary purpose of county agricultural agent work is to help farmers reduce production and distribution costs and to cooperate to attain for themselves individually and collectively an increased net income and better living conditions. The objectives of home demonstration work are to help farm people, especially homemakers, to make the wisest possible use of available cash, time, and other resources in order that they may have and enjoy as many as possible of the comforts, conveniences, and satisfactions of life.

In the statements I have just made I may appear to be saying that the farmer's job is to produce the income while the job of the farmer's wife is to spend it. Actually, however, so large a part of the gross income of farmers is used to pay operating expenses and interest on debts, and occasionally to make some payment on the principal, that only a very limited amount of cash usually is available to the farm homemaker to meet living costs and to contribute to the comforts and conveniences of life.

During the relatively few years in a generation when the more successful farmers have a cash balance of a few hundred dollars after paying their operating and living expenses most of them find it necessary to make replacements of worn-out automobiles and tractors and to pay off some of the mortgage. There are also necessary repairs that must be made on farm buildings. A few farmers use their surplus cash to buy more land.

It is in competition with these seemingly necessary demands for nearly all available cash that the home demonstration agents must help farm homemakers find ways to reduce their living costs so they may have more money for the things that contribute to a more satisfactory rural life.

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Farm homemakers need assistance in providing adequate and balanced diets at minimum cash outlay. Since most farm families have very little available cash to spend for food, they should be helped to produce, preserve, and store vegetables, fruits, meats, and other foods. Farmers as well as farm women must be shown the importance of planning each year for an adequate and balanced food supply. Food selection and preparation must be taught in order to keep each member of the family in good health and at maximum efficiency.

Home demonstration agents aim to help farm women to clothe the family comfortably, attractively, and economically. This is especially important since so many homemakers have only a limited amount of time available for construction, renovation, and care of garments. The limited cash available for buying clothing makes increased attention to consumer buying necessary in order to bring about wise and economical buying of materials and ready-made garments. Clothing is the most popular of all home demonstration projects, being participated in by more rural women than any other. Extension, to my mind, has done a marvelous job in helping rural women and girls to clothe themselves becomingly at low cost.

Reference has already been made to careful planning and budgeting to provide adequately for dietary needs. Would it not be desirable also to help rural people plan clothing budgets? Records of 18,000 farm families show that their average annual expenditure for clothing is less than \$35 a person. With this limited amount to spend, careful selection is necessary. You know much better than I that new dresses, new coats, new hats, will be few and far between on such an expenditure, and that most articles of clothing will have to be made at home - not only made but remodeled or handed on to younger members of the family. If our clothing work is to be thoroughly practical, we shall need to consider the income approach.

Relatively few farm women have the conveniences found in nearly every city home such as running water, a kitchen sink, bathroom, and sewage-disposal system. Most farm homes, even where gas engines and electricity are available on the farm, lack much of the labor-saving equipment found in city homes. In this period when so much is being said about the needs of soil conservation, home demonstration agents should lay more emphasis on human conservation through the use of more energy-saving equipment in the home. We should cooperate in the present emphasis on rural electrification and the use of more labor-saving equipment. Homemakers need continued assistance in providing convenient step-saving kitchens. In communities where electricity is just now being made available to farm homes, homemakers need advice on the selection, use, and care of electrical equipment. As the first use in most homes probably will be for lighting, farm homemakers particularly need assistance in the selection of suitable light fixtures.

Household accounts provide facts that show farm women how they can reduce living costs and increase the supplemental income provided by the home garden, orchard, and poultry flock and have a balance for buying the much-needed labor-saving equipment and more attractive home furnishings. Home demonstration agents frequently have opportunity to assist rural





homemakers in increasing farm income through the establishment of markets. I am familiar with a very successful farm women's market in one of the suburbs of Washington where about 100 farm women, through the sale of farm produce, have not only contributed to household needs but have paid farm taxes and interest on mortgages. Many counties of course do not contain any large city, but even in the smaller towns there is often opportunity for sale of farm produce if it is of good quality and attractively displayed.

Realizing the need of a better understanding and greater cooperation between the members of each family group, including more information about child care and training, a specialist in parent education has recently been added to our Washington staff. Since the community as an environment in which farm families live is an important factor in providing better rural living conditions, home demonstration agents and home-economics specialists train rural women leaders and help maintain home demonstration clubs and girls 4-H clubs and other group organizations through which extension may reach a maximum number of farm women and girls with helpful information to meet immediate home and community problems.

You as State leaders in the clothing and home-furnishings projects have been selected because you are especially interested in and qualified to help farm women and girls in selecting or constructing attractive and serviceable clothing and home furnishings with special reference to color and design. Your special training and experience will tempt some of you to want to give most of your time, information, and assistance to the farm families that can best afford to reach the ideals which you would like to reach in your own homes. I would urge that you make a greater effort to help the underprivileged farm family where children's garments must be handed down from child to child; where the mother cannot have a new dress or a new hat even once a year, and where the home furnishings consist of the bare necessities.

Household-account studies with families having a better income than the average show \$16 being spent per capita per year for all replacement, upkeep, and new furniture and furnishings. With a family of five this figure would be \$80, but that amount means that major and minor furnishing purchases must be made with the utmost care. The home-furnishing staff should be ready to help with these fundamental, economic problems and tie them in closely with the excellent art-appreciation programs already under way.

Based upon a survey conducted by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, it is estimated that about one-third of the farmers in the Central States have a net income of less than \$500. These underprivileged families with low incomes frequently have a small amount of public-school training and a considerable amount of prejudice against printed information based upon scientific research, due to their lack of information. They are harder to serve or influence than the more prosperous progressive farm people. Since these families usually have more children and since there is such a large percentage of families with inadequate incomes, we must reach a larger percentage of them in order to materially raise the level of living conditions on farms.





You have been doing excellent work, but in order to reach our major objectives in home demonstration work you, as State specialists, must coordinate your work with that of other specialists. With our limited funds and personnel you, like other State project leaders, will need to give more intensive study to your job and to planning your work.

Community project leaders need to be trained more systematically and intensively in order that they may pass on information more successfully.

Your State extension director expects you to reach a maximum number of farm women effectively through your projects, with a realization of the need of a balanced extension program in which every major phase of farm living can be advanced simultaneously. Farm women and home demonstration agents expect you to furnish them the most reliable and worth-while subject matter information. Have you tried sufficiently to understand the farm woman's handicaps and problems? Are farm women being given adequate opportunity to help shape up county extension programs to meet their needs, or are you trying to give farm women abbreviated college courses? Even though the local project leaders consider the material presented by you very satisfactory, are the members of the group who may not be so well informed getting the kind of information and inspiration they most need? What are you doing to meet the needs of the less progressive farm women and women with small children who cannot leave their homes, who do not join the homemakers' clubs but who are even more in need of your help?

Finally, in order to reach the ultimate objectives of home demonstration work, are you giving home demonstration agents the assistance they want and need both with reference to practical subject matter and teaching methods? Are you helping them to obtain and use the most desirable illustrative material? Are you checking up on yourselves to measure progress by results obtained in your project, or are you measuring primarily by the number who are exposed to the "lessons"? May I, in conclusion, urge you to give more attention to reaching the girls on farms who are above 4-H club age and out of school. Since they will soon be the homemakers and mothers, let us give them as much training as possible for such home duties as they now have or are ready to undertake.

It is not only our aim to help farm people to use improved farm and homemaking practices and to have more of the comforts of life; we must help them to evaluate and appreciate advantages and opportunities of living in the open country without a longing for city life.

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# Aims and Objectives of Home Demonstration Work

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